

So for us, it's a celebration not only because we're a little bit older—60 years, it's not too much—but also because we feel that our efforts are not in vain. And it is in this optimistic view that I welcome you here.

**President Bush.** Thank you, sir.

**President Peres.** Thank you.

**President Bush.** Mr. President, it's great to be with you. You're known as a wise soul, and your comments reflect your wisdom. I am delighted to be here for the 60th birthday party. As a person who is 61 years old, it doesn't seem that old. [*Laughter*]

But I suspect if you looked back 60 years ago and tried to guess where Israel would be at that time, it would be hard to be able to project such a prosperous, hopeful land. No question, people would have said, "Well, we'd be surrounded by hostile forces." But I doubt people would have been able to see the modern Israel, which is one reason I bring so much optimism to the Middle East, because what happened here is possible everywhere.

And the objective of the United States must be to, one, support our strongest ally and friend in the Middle East—the only true democracy against the forces of terror that you just described—and at the same time, talk about a hopeful future.

So I'm really looking forward to my time here. I want to thank you for giving me a chance to speak to the Knesset. I hear it's quite an experience. It'll be a huge honor to represent my country for your 60th birthday.

In the meantime, we will continue to work toward a vision of—where the—where people who are just reasonable and want a chance to live at peace with Israel have that opportunity, and at the same time, speak clearly about the forces of terror who murder innocent people to achieve their political objectives and how the world must stand against them.

And so I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and see you again. And you're looking good. [*Laughter*] I hope you're feeling well.

Thank you, sir.

**President Peres.** Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. at the President's Residence.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel in Jerusalem

May 14, 2008

**Prime Minister Olmert.** I am delighted to honor President George W. Bush on his second visit. This time, President came to celebrate with Israel the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

We are particularly excited by the fact that the President chose to come this week, which is a very meaningful and very exciting week in his private life. And I congratulate you again, President—

**President Bush.** Thank you.

**Prime Minister Olmert.** —for the marriage of your daughter Jenna this last weekend. We are very happy to host you here.

We had a long discussion about a variety of issues. The first of the issues was the attempts made by Iran to acquire nuclear capabilities. This is a danger of the highest order to the safety of the region—of course, Israel is part of it—and many other countries in the world. And there is an international effort, led by the United States of America, to try and stop Iran from acquiring nuclear power. And the discussions between our two countries will continue on this issue. And of course, Israel will try to join the main forces, led by the United States of America and the President, to try and stop the Iranians from continuing their efforts, which are going on and which are clearly dangerous and threatening for the stability of the world.

We also discussed the situation in Lebanon. We observed the events in Lebanon, and we are very much concerned that there will be an attempt to upset the democratic process, which has to take place properly in Lebanon. And we will continue to observe the situation, and hopefully the situation will stabilize in Lebanon and the Government of Prime Minister Siniora will prevail against the provocations and the efforts made by Hizballah and the Iranians, which are obviously heavily involved in the attempts to upset the situation over there.

We also discussed the situation in Gaza. A couple of days ago, I had a visit of General Omar Suleiman, the head of the Egyptian military intelligence, and we discussed possible terms for what may emerge as a cease-fire in the Gaza district. The fact is that while General Suleiman was visiting here, Qassam rockets were still shot at innocent people in the south of Israel, and two people were killed. And this is a very threatening signal. An organization which pretends to want to stop terror can't continue to shoot at innocent people. We will make exceptional efforts that we will not explain. But Israel naturally will not be able to tolerate continuous attacks on innocent civilians.

We hope that we will not have to act against Hamas in other ways, with the military power that Israel hasn't yet started to use in a serious manner in order to stop it. But it entirely depends on responding positively to the principles set forth by me and by the Israeli Cabinet in order to stop these operations.

We also briefed the President on the negotiations between us and the Palestinians. We are genuinely interested in meeting the time framework that we talked about in Annapolis. I still remember the very eloquent presentation of President Bush prior to the public meeting in Annapolis, in which he described the difficulties, the sensitivities, the complexities, and also the opportunities that the Annapolis process proposes for both sides. The Israeli side is making an exceptional effort on all fronts. We need to reach an understanding that will define accurately the parameters for the realization of the vision of you, Mr. President, of a two-state solution that will relate to the issue of borders, to the issue of refugees, to the issue of the security arrangements, and will set forth also, at the end of the day, the framework for how to deal later with the issue of Jerusalem.

We will continue this discussion. And I'm sure that America will continue the extraordinary efforts made by Secretary Rice and President Bush to try and influence the process so that it will end up in a positive way.

Again, this is not just a ceremonial visit. I thank you, Mr. President, for your friendship, for your dedication to the basic principles which are shared by our two countries,

and for your great friendship. You are a great person; you are a great leader; and you are a great friend. And it's a great honor for me to have the opportunity to host you in the home of the Prime Minister of the State of Israel on the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your friendship, and thank you for your hospitality. Laura and I are looking forward to having dinner with you and Mrs. Olmert tomorrow night, as well as the celebrations tonight and tomorrow.

I'm honored to be representing our country here for the 60th anniversary of the existence of the State of Israel. It's just a great honor, and it's a chance for me to express the enduring friendship of the American people with the Israeli people. It's also an interesting time to come because, you know, here we are in the heart of a thriving democracy, and yet that democracy, as are other democracies, are being challenged by extremists and terrorists, people who use violence to try to advance their dark vision of the world.

I happen to believe it's an important role of the United States to stand with democracies and to stand strong against terrorists, whether it be to stand with Israel against the existential threat of a nuclear weapon with Iran or whether it be to stand with the Siniora Government.

What's interesting—what took place in Lebanon—is that Hizballah, the so-called protector of the Lebanese against Israel, has now turned on its own people. And as you mentioned, Hizballah is supported by Iran. This is an Iranian effort to destabilize that young democracy. And the United States stands strongly with the Siniora Government.

You brought up Hamas. Hamas's objective—stated objective is the destruction of the State of Israel. And therefore, the United States will stand strongly with Israel, as well as stand strongly with the Palestinians who don't share that vision.

And so I thank you very much for your efforts to describe what's possible for the millions of Palestinians who simply want to live side by side with Israel in peace. We've had an extensive discussions on a variety of issues, and there's no better person to discuss those issues with than you. You clearly see the

threats. You clearly see the opportunities. And I want to thank you for your strong leadership, and thank you for your friendship.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Prime Minister's Residence. In his remarks, he referred to Aliza Olmert, wife of Prime Minister Olmert; and Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon.

### Remarks in Jerusalem

May 14, 2008

Thank you all. President Peres, thank you, sir, for your hospitality. Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Olmert, it's great to be with you. We consider you friends. Heads of state, thank you all for coming. I think it's a great tribute to this conference, as well as to Israel, that so many heads of state have come. Ex-heads of state and ex-leaders, thanks for being here. Save a seat in the ex-leader's club. [*Laughter*] Citizens of Israel, Laura and I loved coming to your beautiful country, and thank you for your warm hospitality. Citizens of the United States, my fellow Americans, spend freely, and behave yourselves. [*Laughter*]

Distinguished guests, I really appreciate your warm welcome. And we are thrilled to be here with one of America's closest friends. Laura and I are honored to represent the American people on the 60th anniversary of your independence. Happy birthday.

As we celebrate the anniversary, it is useful to look back at the story of your founding. It is the story of how faith guided the Jewish people through centuries of bitter exile. It is a story of how those living behind ghetto walls and barbed wire never lost sight of Jerusalem. It is a story of how brave pioneers risked everything to redeem the promise of this land. It is a marvelous story.

When Israel's founders gathered in Tel Aviv to sign your Declaration of Independence, the threat of war loomed. But it could not overshadow the joy of people who had lived to see their prayers answered. Celebrations broke out all across this land, and of course, they broke out in America as well. In New York, young men and women danced the *hora* in the streets. In Washington, a crowd gathered to watch a flag-raising cere-

mony outside the building that would become Israel's first Embassy. After one man saw the flag bearing the Star of David, he said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day."

Looking back 60 years later, it is important to remember what the founders of Israel had to overcome at every stage of the journey. They established one of the world's great democracies in a region where democracy had few roots. They formed a unified army out of immigrants and refugees from many different countries. They planted the seeds of a modern economy in the sands of an ancient desert. In these accomplishments, we see the visionary leadership of men and women like Herzl and Weizmann and Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir and Rabin and Sharon, and we honor each of them this evening.

And looking back 60 years later, we've also got to remember the courage of President Harry S. Truman. As Israel prepared to declare independence, President Truman faced a tough choice over whether to recognize a new state. The future of Israel hung in the balance. As Chaim Weizmann told the President, he said, "History and providence have placed this issue in your hands." And today, we know that the forces of providence could not have chosen a better man than America's 33d President.

Eleven minutes after Israel came into existence, the United States became the first nation to recognize its independence. And because Harry Truman did what was right instead of following the conventional wisdom, we can say today that America is Israel's oldest and best friend in the world.

With every passing year, the bonds of friendship between America and Israel have grown stronger. America stands for peace, and so does Israel. And as we stand in peace, we must understand the realities of the world in which we live. We must be steadfast and we must be strong in the face of those who murder the innocent to achieve their objectives. And in the long run, we share a powerful belief in a powerful weapon against the terrorists. We believe that the surest way to defeat the enemies of hatred is to advance the cause of hope through the cause of freedom—liberty as the great alternative to tyranny and terror.